

Resurrection and Ascension Realities

by Thomas Bradbury

The sermon emphasizes the resurrection and ascension realities of Christ and their implications for believers, highlighting the perfection and completeness of God's work in Christ.

Scripture: John 5:25, John 14:2, Romans 8:17, 2 Corinthians 1:5, Galatians 6:14, Ephesians 1:3, Philippians 3:20, Colossians 1:24, Colossians 3:1

Topics: "Christ's Resurrection", "Spiritual Union"

Description

Thomas Bradbury preaches about the importance of seeking heavenly things above earthly desires, emphasizing the need to set our affections on Christ and the spiritual realities found in Him. He contrasts the focus on Christ in the epistle to the Ephesians with the external trappings of Christianity in the epistle to the Colossians, urging believers to seek a continual coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in their lives. Bradbury highlights the believer's union with Christ in death, resurrection, and ascension, encouraging a deep spiritual communion with the risen and reigning Christ, leading to a transformation in the believer's life and desires.

Transcript

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."
(Colossians 3:1-4)

The design of the Holy Ghost, and the desire of the apostle Paul, in the Scripture before us, was to lead the mind of the Colossian Christians away from everything short of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Paul delighted in being the honoured instrument in the hand of God in drawing their minds away from earthly, fleshly, perishing things, and fixing their attention upon those spiritual and heavenly realities which are to be found nowhere but in the great and glorious Head of the Church. This was his object and aim in every sermon he preached, in every letter he wrote, but is not so apparent in some epistles as in others. In the epistle to the Ephesians this shines forth most gloriously. There was a reason for this, because throughout the whole of it he was describing a people in blessed association and identification with the Lord Jesus Christ, and the spiritual privileges and blessings they possess and enjoy in Him. As you read through the Ephesian epistle, you will not find an allusion to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. But you will find something concerning His coming in almost every other portion of the New Testament. You who are

spiritually one with Him will notice amid all the fleshly religion surrounding you, that the majority of professors speak not of a present Christ, a Christ in the midst of them. They enjoy not the glorious millennium of grace in union with Him, no true freedom from sin, no sweet deliverance from the fear of death, no immunity from hell and the grave, and generally place an adjective before that word "coming," and call it, "the second coming." My dear friends, I want something more than that. I desire His third, forsooth, ay, I want His thousandth coming. I rest not satisfied without His continual coming. I love His appearing, for when He appears not, it is very dark and dreary, and spiritual deadness is irksome to my soul. I do love the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with the blessings of grace and the hope of glory to my heart. I love to experience His loving embrace, to know, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that He is mine, and I am His, to throw back Satan's "ifs," "buts," and "peradventures" upon himself. I love to delight myself in the company of the God of my salvation, and to rest in the sweet assurance that I am a member of that family which is loved with an everlasting love, redeemed by precious blood, quickened and kept alive by the Holy Ghost, ennobled by grace union to the King of kings, and heirs of that glorious inheritance which can never be moved, even God Himself, without whom I can neither be gratified nor satisfied.

As we look through that blessed epistle to the Ephesians, we learn that those whom he addresses are in eternal union and spiritual communion with Christ, in whom before all worlds they were blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies (chap. 1:3) In the heavenlies they are blessed with resurrection-power, and ascension-glory with Him according to chap. 1:20: "Which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies."

The place of blessing and glory is also one of fellowship, communion, refreshment, and rest. See chap. 2:6, "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ." It is also the place of Divine communication to spiritual revelation, where Jehovah is pleased to make known His mind and will to His redeemed and to use them as dispensers of His truth to the angels who surround His throne. It is a marvellous mercy for us to know that God has made me a messenger of peace and consolation to His tried and tempted children; and more than this, for, as Augustus Toplady declared, when he stood preaching in his Church at Broad Hembury, when only very few poor sinners were met together to hear him, angels formed part of his congregation.

It is a wonderful mystery of redeeming love that poor worms of the earth should be the instruments through whom God reveals His mind to angelic beings. You see this in chap. 3:10, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenlies might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." But with the enjoyment of all these privileges the child of God forgets not that he is still in the flesh, and surrounded by sin, suffering, temptation, and tribulation.

Turn to chap. 6:12, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of the world, against wicked spirits in the heavenlies." That is something more than visiting the dens of vice and striving to make the thief an honest man. The would-be philanthropist may succeed in making such religious, while his religion will make him two-fold more a child of hell than he was before. You may go to the beer-shop and the gin-palace and reclaim the drunkard, or the debauchee, and make of him a sober man, and what is styled, an ornament of society, yet he may go down to the depths of eternal despair with all his moral and religious ornamentation on his head.

The living child of God is lifted above such flesh and blood wrestling, as saith the apostle: "We wrestle not against flesh and blood." We see sin in the root, while the moralist sees it only in the fruit. "Spirit, not letter, is my motto," said the valiant William Parks of Openshaw, to which my soul responds "Amen." When God

bleses His message of love and mercy to the heart of a thief, that will make him honest. Grace alone can make a man sober in God's sight. Do we know anything of the transforming power of grace? Yes, blessed be God, we do; and we bless Him because the work is all His own.

When we come to consider this epistle to the Colossians, we see the apostle dealing out the same truths with something concerning the coming of the Lord. Why is this? Because Jesus was not quite the All in all of the Colossian Christians. The Ephesian Christians were wholly occupied with their great and glorious Head. The Colossians were engaged with the outside trappings of Christianity, the so-called means of grace, and the conveniences of public worship. As we proceed through the first chapter of the epistle to the Colossians, we meet with a characteristic word, and that word is "ALL." This is to express the glorious perfection of a gracious supply abounding by Jesus Christ to the whole election of grace. Whatever God does, He does perfectly. There is no half-doing with God. David could say: "The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me." (Ps. 137:8) Solomon declared: "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it: and God doeth it, that man should fear before Him." (Eccle. 3:14) Paul was confident that He who began His good work of grace in a redeemed sinner's soul would finish it until the day of Jesus Christ. (Phil. 1:6) Look at Col. 1:9, "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in ALL wisdom and spiritual understanding." This was a prayer that they might not fall short of that perfect schooling which is in Christ Jesus. "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto ALL pleasing." What pleasing is this? See! The Father is pleased, Jesus is pleased, and the Holy Ghost is pleased, and elect sinners are pleased when they perceive the work of the Lord abounding in each other. "Strengthened with ALL might." This reminds me of an old friend asking me how I was this morning, when I replied, "I have to go into the pulpit." He responded, "When I am weak, then am I strong." This is the strength of the Lord, the power of Christ, the omnipotence of Deity. "Strengthened with all might, according to" my faith or diligence? Oh, no! It is "according to His glorious power." That is the might that suits me. "Unto ALL patience." Have you got it? If I am in union with Him I have it, yet it is not mine; but His. It is His own work, His own grace. "And long-suffering with joyfulness." This is the joy of JEHOVAH (Neh. 8:10) and the strength of His people. See how the word ALL is repeated in the 16th, 17th, and 18th verses, and in the 19th we have this precious declaration: "For it pleased the Father that in Him should ALL fullness dwell." Not some, but ALL fullness. "And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace." (John 1:16) Grace received is the pledge and earnest of future and more copious supplies.

As we meditate upon chap. 2, we find the apostle expressing his fear and care for the Colossian Christians. You do not find this in his epistle to the Ephesian saints. The Ephesians were all right, being wholly occupied with their Head and Lord. The Colossians were taken up with the outside trappings, while they lost sight of resurrection and ascension realities. They were like a lot of religious children delighting themselves with playthings. I have found it true in my experience and observation that a child of God who delights in his playthings will not look very much like a child if you interfere with them.

But the apostle, in his conflict, fear, and care for his brethren, prays "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love." You may rest assured of this, there can be no knitting together, either naturally or spiritually, without pain, yet there is true pleasure in the pain when the knitting is by Divine power and love. "And unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ."

Here you see the Divine Three-in-One set forth, "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Hid! Who to? Not to the Ephesians, for they were revealed to them; but to the Colossians

they were hid. Behind what? Behind their ceremonies, ordinances, rites, rules, and laws. Wherever you find such things as these abounding, you will be sure to detect the fact that the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden from view. The apostle continues: "And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ." Nevertheless, throughout the succeeding portion of this chapter he warns them against their tendencies, and points them to the perfection they had in the doing and dying of Christ. Look at verse 9: "For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power."

They were incomplete in respect to those outward things which engrossed so much of their attention. Come to verse 16: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days." Blessed be God, we have a perpetual Sabbath in the person and work of Christ. See how Paul states this in Heb. 4:9, "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." While every other rest is disturbed this rest in Christ remaineth ever the same.

"For we which have believed do enter into rest." It does not say we have entered into rest, though that is a blessed fact; but, we do enter into rest, or into a keeping of the Sabbath. What is this Sabbath? "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28) When is this Sabbath? On Sunday? Yes, and on any day of the week He is pleased to reveal Himself to us. When He speaks home this precious command to our hearts, we do enter into God's rest, God's Sabbath, and we cease from our own works as He did from His.

As we enjoy liberty and rest in Christ, the Holy Ghost by the apostle says to us, "Let no man judge you in those things which are a shadow of things to come, for the body is of Christ. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God."

Here you notice the difference between this epistle and that to the Ephesians. The epistle to the Ephesians reveals Christ, the Head, holding the members, the epistle to the Colossians describes the members holding to the Head. Each position is one of blessed privilege. It is a mercy for me to hang upon Christ for life and salvation

"When sins and fears preveiling rise,

And fainting hope almost expires;"

but it is a sweeter mercy for me to experience the embracings of the arms of everlasting love. "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" This is as much as to say, Why are you bothering yourselves with these fleshly, fleeting, and perishing things ("which all are to perish with the using") after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh."

Now then, Where do you live? Where is your home? Where is your place of worship? Our home is where our heart is. Our place of worship is where Christ is pleased to reveal Himself. A few of us found this to be

the case a few weeks ago at Dulwich House, when we had our friend and brother Rolleston with us. The Lord gave us a precious dish from 1 John 1:3, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." I should be the most miserable wretch in creation if I must stand here to declare to you that which I have not seen, felt, and handled for myself. Why do I declare that which God has made experimentally mine? Because you are here to listen to me? No! But because there are those here who have come longing, desiring, and sighing for the presence of the Master, to sit at His table and partake of His bounty; and it is the desire of my heart that such may have fellowship with me in the things of God. Notice what John says: "That ye also may have fellowship with us." It is my blessed privilege to stand here, as a priest of God's own appointing and sending, in the midst of His worshipping priests for all His living elect are priests in union with the Lamb feeding in spiritual fellowship upon the breast of everlasting affection and the shoulder of irresistible power. It is a marvellous mercy to know and feel that

"His love is as great as His power,

And neither knows measure nor end."

To know that we are feasting upon the slain Lamb causes the heart to quiver with gratitude and delight before Him. Then we can say, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father." The Father feasts with delight upon that which alone can satisfy the hungering souls of His children. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ," within the walls of Grove chapel, in some highly-favoured parish church, in the retirement of our chambers, or, as we are walking by the way. In whatever place of God's appointing He blesses His twos and threes with the communication of what He has done for them in the Son of His love, that is a place of worship to them. Where do you live? "Our citizenship is in heaven." (Phil. 3:20) Where do you worship? "Yet will I be to them a little Sanctuary in the countries where they shall come." (Ezek. 11:16) What a blessed truth! In every spot of difficulty, doubt, and danger, temptation, trial, and tribulation He has promised to be with His people. When our poor hearts have felt cold and dead, and we have been burdened with the spirit of accursed indifference, even then He has been carrying on His own gracious work in us, and bringing us to that spot of favour and blessedness where He would reveal to us the precious fact that our salvation, regeneration, preservation, and glorification are all in His own gracious hands.

We will now glance at the portion I have read as my text. It forms a rich cluster of experimental truths, and if they be opened up to our hearts by the power of God the Holy Ghost, we shall have a blessed time together. We see the Church in Christ dead to the law, to sin, to the world, and to the flesh. We also see it one with Him in resurrection-power and ascension-glory. We behold with wonder the dignity thrust upon it as seated with Him in the glory of God the Father at His right hand. We see also with joy the effect of all this, the affection of the child of God set upon things above in loving communion with a risen and a reigning Christ. Mark! "Ye are dead." As we are blessed with a spiritual acquaintance with the New Testament Scriptures we see and understand something of that very blessed and glorious truth union to our Lord Jesus Christ. Oneness with Christ is the glory of God's Gospel. As the body is united to the head, so all the spiritual members of the Lord Jesus Christ are united to Him, their great and glorious Head. From Him all motive, power, and influence flows to them. The union of Christ to the Church and the Church to Christ flows from the eternal and irrevocable purpose of JEHOVAH. You will see this in Rom. 8:29, "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate conformed to the image of His Son." Did you notice that I left out those two words "to be?" They are in italics, and the verse will read very well without them, thus: "He also did predestinate conformed to the image of His Son." He could not predestinate them otherwise. He could not predestinate them to Himself as they stood in union with Adam the first, neither

could He go out of Himself for a predestinating plan or design, therefore He conformed them to that which He found in Himself, "the image of His Son." Old John Kent knew something of this when he sang so sweetly,

"Then, in the glass of His decrees

Christ and His bride appeared as one;

Her sin, by imputation, His,

While she is spotless splendour shone."

"Conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn, or chief, among many brethren." When the word "Firstborn" appears in many portions of God's Word referring to our Lord Jesus Christ, it sets Him forth as the Chief or First Elect of His elect brethren. "Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified." Now let us notice this glorious truth of union with Christ as set before us experimentally in the epistles, and according to the mind of the Holy Ghost. If I am conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ in living oneness, if I am made spiritually one with Him according to 1 Cor. 6:17, "He that is joined to the Lord is spiritually one with Him," I shall be led to glorify God in my spirit, soul, and body, which are His, and that oftentimes in the furnace and in the flood. In spots of suffering and temptation I shall be like Him. As He was "a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," so shall I have spiritual sorrow and acquaintance with grief. As those words of the hymn writer are blessedly true,

"A Mourner all His life was He,

A dying Lamb at last,"

so throughout our earthly pilgrimage we shall find association and identification with Him in His mourning and dying. You find this truth stated in Rom. 8:17, "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." You find it also in 2 Tim. 2:10-12, "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying, For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." If we bear His cross, we shall wear His crown. We must have the conflict before the victory, the toil before the rest, the trial before the triumph, the experience of perplexity before the enjoyment of sweet peace in Him. Yes, in the world we shall have tribulation; but in Him we must enjoy the peace of God, the quietness of God, the tranquility of God, which passeth all understanding. This is the quietness of God which He maintains over all the confusion, disorder, and strife abounding in the world, which He causes to work together for good to all those who love Him, being the called according to His purpose.

Now look at another portion which you will find in 2 Cor. 1:5, "For as the sufferings abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." We may talk about the sufferings of Christ abounding in Gethsemane and on Calvary; but as we talk of them, do our hearts meet in the furnace of affliction and find sweet oneness with Him therein? Mine does sometimes. Look now at that blessed portion in Col. 1:24a Scripture so little understood, yet used by Popish and Jesuitical controversialists to suit their own purpose, and make it say anything and everything but what it means: "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you." I feel convinced that there is not an ache of my body but what God has designed for the spiritual

benefit of some poor tried member of His Church there is not a trial, trouble, or temptation but He has sent it for the good of some poor child in His family there has not been a deep hole into which I have been plunged but He has overruled it for the comfort and consolation of some poor battered and shattered ones who are near and dear to Him. But the apostle says, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church." As long as a God-sent minister is in the body, he must know something of a continual crucifixion of the flesh and mortification of his members for the mutual comfort and consolation of the suffering members of the one body. This is a marvellous and mysterious truth unknown to worldlings, hypocrites, and proud professors. There are the afflictions of Christ mystical, the sympathy of suffering existing between Christ the Head and all His living members. He experienced them in all their fullness while we have them dealt out in measure to us.

The first point we notice is DEATH. "Ye are dead." What are we to understand by that? A living child of God knows something of spiritual death by Divine power. In Romans 7, the apostle shows from his own case the killing work of the law in the hearts of elect vessels of mercy. He says, "For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Mark you, I know what that means; but it was not through hearing the commandments read in church, or by my reading them. It was not because they were written by the finger of God upon tables of stone. It was not because the Spirit of God caused them to be written in Exod. 20, and again in Deut. 5, but it was because the commandment came to me by the power of the Holy Ghost revealing to me the true nature of sin. Sin then became exceeding sinful to me. Where previously I saw virtue, I then beheld vice. "Sin revived and I died." Yes, I died to all creature wisdom, creature ability, creature righteousness, and creature purity. Brought under the power of this killing process I am unable to do anything in the matter of my salvation and acceptance with God. What can a dead man do? You may do what you like with him, but you cannot produce life, or preserve beauty or comeliness. Bring the rays of the sun to bear upon his mortal remains, and putrefaction becomes still more putrid. That which is loathsome must be buried and hidden from sight. However much our natural affections may hover over that which was loved and prized, when death seizes it, we say with Abraham, "Bury my dead out of my sight." As God the ever-blessed Spirit works in you and in me, we see ourselves to be but one mass of sin and death before God, and we should just as soon expect to find holiness in hell as to find purity in the old Adam nature. Yes, you may as soon expect to hear of pleasure in the realms of never-ending despair as to find wisdom, righteousness, or faith in spiritual mysteries in the natural man.

"Ye are dead" through and to the law, and to sin. Through the doing and dying of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have become dead to sin, which was made life to us by the power of the law. How is this, say you? Because He who is our Surety, our Mediator, and our Redeemer from the curse of the law, took the whole load of our transgressions, sins, and iniquities, and bore them in His own body to the tree, carried them into the land of never-ending forgetfulness, threw them into the depths of the sea of eternal oblivion, cast them all behind God's back, and, as we look into our Father's face, we find immensity, eternity, and infinity between us and them. He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He made an end of sin, so that now it has no damning power over the child of God. Sin has no penal power over me as I stand in Christ. Neither Satan nor law can now exact anything from me, for my sins appear not in the presence of my God, but the righteousness of my Lord and God is on me in their place. See! "Dead to the law by the body of Christ." As human laws wreck all their vengeance and spend all their power upon the culprit who suffers the last dread penalty, and can exact no more; so the spiritual, perfect, and fiery law of God exhausted all its wrath and power upon Jesus, the Surety of His people, by which they are everlasting free from all its claims.

"No claims can law or justice have

On Jesus' honoured bride;

Full payment to the law He gave

When for her sins He died."

Oh, it is a glorious privilege for me to know that when the law inflicted all its sentence of condemnation and death upon Jesus, it finished all its course with me. I was dealt with in Him, and by His sufferings and death I am delivered from all its demands. In the person of Zion's adorable Surety, all in union with Him find all the law's exactions frankly met and fully answered. "Dead to the world." It is marvellous how the world fastens upon and clings to us, and our natural affections cling to it. We often seem earth-bound in our affections. I do, and nothing but a knowledge and felt experience of my oneness with my once crucified Lord gives me a gracious lift out of my worldliness and sensuality.

"I thirst, but not as once I did,

The vain delights of earth to share;

Thy wounds, Emmanuel, all forbid

That I should seek my pleasures there.

"It was the sight of Thy dear cross

First weaned my soul from earthly things;

And taught me to esteem as dross

The mirth of fools, and pomp of kings."

See Gal. 6:14, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." As the world receded from before the failing vision of the poor wretch who experienced the death-throes of crucifixion, so the delights, enjoyments, and pleasures of this world fade away from the spiritual vision of that highly-favoured, yet exercised sinner who can say by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." (Gal. 1:20)

This brings us to notice our oneness with Christ in resurrection. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." When Christ died, all the elect died in Him; when He was buried, all His members in a mystic or spiritual manner were buried with Him; when He rose again, every one of them rose with Him in the purpose and good pleasure of the Father. See how blessedly Paul keeps this before the mind of the Ephesian Christians. In chap. 1:19,20 he prays that they might know "what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places."

Again in chap. 2:4-6, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." This was not a mere opinion or matter of doctrine with the apostle. He prayed, "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection." (Phil. 3:10) As His resurrection-power is communicated to us, we long for further manifestations of the love and beauty of Jesus, that we may rise to something higher than prayer meetings, religious services, or even communion with the brethren.

Yes, we long for a clean lift in union with Him out of sin and self. Our souls cleave to the dust, but our cry ascends to Him who alone can answer, "Quicken Thou me according to Thy word." Ofttimes we find ourselves in the grave of carnality and bound around with fleshly graveclothes, yet, blessed be His holy name, we know something of the sweetness and power of that voice which John writes, "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." (John 5:25) This leads the mind to the contemplation and enjoyment of His ascension-glories.

"He ascended into heaven" is an article of our creed and of our confidence. He is gone there to appear in the presence of God for us, and to draw our hearts with loving desire after Him. When He ascended to His Father and ours, the disciples who witnessed His flight "looked steadfastly toward heaven." They were asked the question, "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" They might have answered, "Because the one Object of our heart's affection is there." Why are we ofttimes looking up and longing for home?

Because of the gracious promise He left to us, "I go to prepare," or possess, "a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; and where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:2,3) There we have the blessed assurance that at this moment a living and loving Christ stands before the throne in our nature, possessing the kingdom for us. God, in our nature, in our Father's house, holds in undisturbed security the everlasting and inalienable inheritance which the Father has made over to us in Him.

Do we believe it? As assuredly as the great King-Priest has power over all things in heaven and in earth, so will He draw our affections and fix them upon things above. His covenant command will come home with almighty power, "If ye then be risen with Christ," from sin, from the law, from the world, from death, and from self, "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Here we see His session. Having finished the work of His Father's glorification and His people's salvation, He stands before the Father with acceptance, and all His people accepted in Him. "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." However good, precious, or lovely earthly possessions may be, death, disappointment, and dissatisfaction is stamped upon them all.

"Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;

Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away,

Change and decay in all around I see;

O Thou who changest not, abide with me."

"For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." The apostle as much as says, Life and immortality is brought to light to my heart, but He is hidden from you. When He appears by the power of the Holy Ghost to your

waiting souls, then shall ye also appear with Him and as He is. Then ye shall appear in the glory of His person, in the glory of His salvation, in the glory of His righteousness, and in the glory of His kingdom. Then you shall truly understand the mystery of redeeming love, and experience the indescribable sympathies which flow from His loving heart to His suffering members here below. This appearing in grace is the pledge, the earnest, and the sweet foretaste of our appearing with Him in that eternal glory which He has in store, and holds in undisturbed security, for all those in eternal and hallowed association with Himself.

May He add His blessing for His name's sake. Amen.

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